

The Fundamental Priority of Church Selected Scriptures

INTRODUCTION:

Priority is a very commonly used word in our time. And I think as our society becomes more frantic, more disjointed, disconnected, more mobile, more involved as life speeds up and becomes literally engulfed in so many different things, the word "priority" seems to be constantly on the lips of people who are trying to sort out life and get some kind of pecking order in terms of the things they need to be committed to. We have books on priorities, setting priorities, you can hire people to come in and teach you how to prioritize things. It's really become a very, very popular word because it seems to be a very great need in our complex time.

When we use the word "priority" we just sort of use it on its own. It sort of exists in its own little world. And when we say "priority" we usually mean the important thing, or what is the main thing, or what is most necessary. Well let me dig a little deeper into that word. It is helpful to know something about the word "priority," it is simply a form of the word prior. Now we all know what the word "prior" means, it means before, or ahead of, or preceding. A priority then is something that comes before everything else. It precedes everything else. It's ahead of everything else. It is then what is supreme, what is essential, what is foundational, what is preeminent, what is antecedent to everything that follows. So when you talk about priority, you're really saying what in my life

comes before anything else? What is before anything else and everything else?

More and more, the priority of the church in the life of believers is less and less. I have noticed that in the short time I have been in ministry, that there are more Christians who are content with not attending. It does not bother them that they do not interact with a body of believers on a continual basis. They are happy to stay right where they are..... at home.

There are ominous signs on the horizon that lead me to wonder where and what condition the church will be in in 10-20 more years.

Churches used to meet more often each week for worship and Bible study, but the trend is in the downward direction. Churches are meeting less and less.

Sunday morning is about it. For most. The business of life and the simple lack of desire to go to church has contributed to a church full of empty pews.

Now I understand that there can be some reasons why people get discouraged with church or fed up with it.

Here are some I thought of

1. Hypocrisy
2. Tradition
3. Divisions
4. Shallowness
5. Poor leadership

As a result some Christians have given up. Forget it why go, why try.

But with this surrender to complacency and apathy, the Christian and the Church Suffer

I. THE ATTENDANCE

1. ACTS 2:42

Michael Griffiths(?), the British writer, said, "Christians collectively seem to be suffering from a strange amnesia. A high proportion of people that go to church have forgotten what it's all about. Week by week they attend the services in a special building. They go through their particular time-honored routine. They give little thought to the purpose of what they're doing. The Bible talks about the bride of Christ, but the church today seems like a ragged Cinderella, hideous among the ashes." Pretty graphic.

2. HEBREWS 10:24

3. I COR 12

In the gray dawn of an April day in 1945, in the Nazi camp of Flossenbug, a pastor by the name of Dietrich Bonhoeffer was executed. He was executed by special order of Heinrich Himmler, Hitler's executioner. He had been arrested two years before, and over that period of two years, he had been transferred from

prison, to prison, to prison. From Tegel, to Berlin, to Buchenwald, to Schönburg, finally to Flossenburg. And in the moving of Bonhoeffer from place to place, he lost all contact with the outside world. Everyone that he knew was severed from him. He lost, according to his own testimony, the most precious possession he had, and that was fellowship. Fellowship.

Bonhoeffer wrote a book called “Life Together.” I would commend it to your reading, based on Psalm 1:33. He had written that book years before. He wrote in that book of the richness of fellowship, which he, during his imprisonment, leading up to his death, lost. This is what he said. “The physical presence of other Christians is a source of incomparable joy and strength to the believer. A physical sign of the gracious presence of the triune God. How inexhaustible are the riches that open up for those who, by God’s will, are privileged to live in the daily fellowship of life with other Christians.” Further, he wrote, “Let him who has such a privilege thank God on his knees and declare. It is grace, nothing but grace, that we are allowed to live in fellowship with Christian brothers.” That’s the church. That’s the church.

II. THE ATTENTION

- 1. ACTS 2 :42**
- 2. I TIM 4:13**
- 3. II TIM 3:15-16**

Sadly, however, many Christians today are more affected by the movies they watch than the sermons they hear. They show more enthusiasm for video games or televised sporting events than they do for pursuing Christlikeness. They fill their minds with the sounds of talk radio or the latest hit songs rather than letting the Word of God richly dwell within them. Deep down, they enjoy exploring the pleasures of the world—even if only vicariously—as they watch actors play out scenes in which sinful pursuits are seemingly fulfilled with little or no consequences. The irony is, of course, that in real life those same actors are just as miserable as everyone else—a sobering reality that keeps supermarket tabloids in business.

III.THE ASSIGNMENT

- 1. MATT. 28**
- 2. ACTS 2:42-47**